

## **PART TWO: UNIT FIRE MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN**

### **CDF BATTALION REPORTS**

As was noted earlier, the Planning Collaborative determined in January 2005 to utilize Planning Zones equivalent to the Mutual Aid Zones used by local emergency response agencies. Those zones correlate to CDF Battalions and Planning Meeting locations as follows:

Planning Zone 1: CDF Battalions 1, 2, and 4 (north and northeast)  
Covelo, Willits/ Brooktrails/ Pine Mountain, Laytonville, and Leggett/ Piercy

Planning Zone 2: CDF Battalion 3 (southeast and central)  
Hopland, Ukiah, and Redwood Valley

Planning Zone 3: CDF Battalion 5 (southwest)  
Anderson Valley and Point Arena/ Gualala

Planning Zone 4: CDF Battalion 6 (west central and coastal)  
Mendocino/ Fort Bragg and Westport

In this section, each CDF Battalion will be described in two parts:

- 1) A report prepared by the CDF Battalion Chief or Captain
- 2) Additional information from the Fire Safe Council about the grassroots “flavor” of the community meetings, plus ideas, concerns, and assets at risk identified by attendees

## **CDF BATTALION 1 / PLANNING ZONE 1: COVELO**

Battalion 1 of CDF's Mendocino Unit consists of 272,729 acres of State Responsibility Area (SRA) located in the northeast corner of Mendocino County. Within the Battalion is the town of Covelo, centered in Round Valley, with a population of approximately 2,200 people. A large percentage of the population -- approximately 1,300 -- are Native Americans who live on Round Valley Indian Tribe (RVIT) controlled lands established in 1856. The Round Valley floor is predominately Local Responsibility Area (LRA) and fire protection is the responsibility of the Covelo Fire Protection District (CFPD), although CDF responds to all calls in the District through an automatic mutual aid agreement.

The real estate market boom has reached the Round Valley, causing land and home prices to double over the last year. The economy is mainly supported by cattle ranchers, small timber harvest projects, and a great deal of "medical" marijuana. The climate is Mediterranean in type, and vegetation is oak woodlands changing to conifer timberlands in the higher elevations.

### **COLLABORATION**

CDF's Covelo station, the Covelo Fire Protection District, and the U.S. Forest Service have joined forces for several public education activities at local schools and community events. CDF also works with the Round Valley Indian Tribes' Department of Natural Resources on vegetative fuel reduction in the SRA. CDF engine and dozer crews from Covelo have constructed a fuel break on the western ridge above the Round Valley Indian Housing tract, and CDF crews will continue to maintain it. CDF has also taught several Incident Command Classes to the Round Valley Indian Tribe crews to assist them to qualify for fire line duty.

The USFS, CDF, CFPD, and the Fire Safe Council have determined that the entire Covelo battalion is an at-risk WUI area, with several specific areas having greater hazards.

### **LOCAL FIRE PROBLEM**

To address the fire problem in the Covelo Battalion without looking at the Local Responsibility Area fire causes would not produce a true evaluation. More than 70 percent of the fires in the Battalion occur within one square mile on the Round Valley Indian Housing tract within the LRA. Arson is the leading cause of fire in the Battalion and has been for several years. The County Sheriff's Office and CDF work cooperatively to investigate and incarcerate arsonists. Thus far in 2005, two local arsonists have been arrested, in addition to one in 2004. Local, state, and federal fire cooperators as well as the Sheriff's Office continue to educate in the schools and community in hopes of reducing arson and accidentally caused fires.

## **PAST PROJECTS**

The “Fire Defense Plan” prepared for the RVIT by CDF in May 1992 is intended to be an integral part of land management planning on the Indian Tribe lands. It identifies several fuel breaks and Vegetation Management Program projects that can mitigate hazards and risks impacting the Battalion and the Covelo community. With the increasing likelihood of wildfires on the west side of the valley, it is imperative that a maintained fuel break exist on the ridge west of the Round Valley Indian Housing Tract. As was noted above, CDF constructed and continues to maintain a fuel break there, known as the Little Valley fuel break. This break is an extension of one completed by the RVIT crews and provides direct protection to the 100 homes below it.

Continuing northwest from Little Valley, another fuel break, known by the name “Pink,” was developed in the plan. This break will minimize the risk of uncontrolled fires becoming large and damaging on both the west side of Round Valley and the east side of Poonkinney Ridge.

Bulldozers and 15-person hand crews are working year round on fuel breaks and hazard reduction, thanks to the RVIT Resource Management section. Since 2000, the RVIT has established nine new fuel breaks. All of these are grant funded, mechanically installed by a crew of 15, and designed to protect natural resources such as timber, in addition to homes. The fuel breaks and dates of creation are: Big Bend (2002), Updegraff (2001), Brushy (2003), Ten Bear (2003-2004), Perry (2001), Little Valley (2001-2002), Short Creek (2003/2004), Murphy (2001), and Nomalaki (2000).

## **FUTURE PROJECTS**

The southeast corner of Round Valley is called Chicken Ridge and Pigeon Ridge, where approximately 75 to 100 homes and other structures are located on a northwesterly slope with a large vegetative fuel load mixed among the structures. This area has had little fire activity in the past several years, but has the potential to suffer from a large and damaging fire.

CDF Covelo would like to begin more public education so homeowners can prepare themselves for a Wildland-Uban Interface fire. We plan to begin with public meetings and road association meetings to show a cooperative effort and educate community residents.

## **FIRE SAFE COUNCIL COMMUNITY MEETING IN BATTALION 1**

The U.S. Forest Service hosted a community outreach meeting for Covelo and the surrounding Round Valley on May 9, 2005. Several USFS personnel participated, including Blaine Baker, District Ranger for the Covelo and Upper Lake Districts of the Mendocino National Forest. The presence of local Fire Chief Bill Baker, (former) CDF Battalion 1 Chief

Bob Rodello, Evan Wilson of the Round Valley Indian Tribes Natural Resources Department, and a resident of private property within the National Forest boundaries provided a good variety of perspectives.

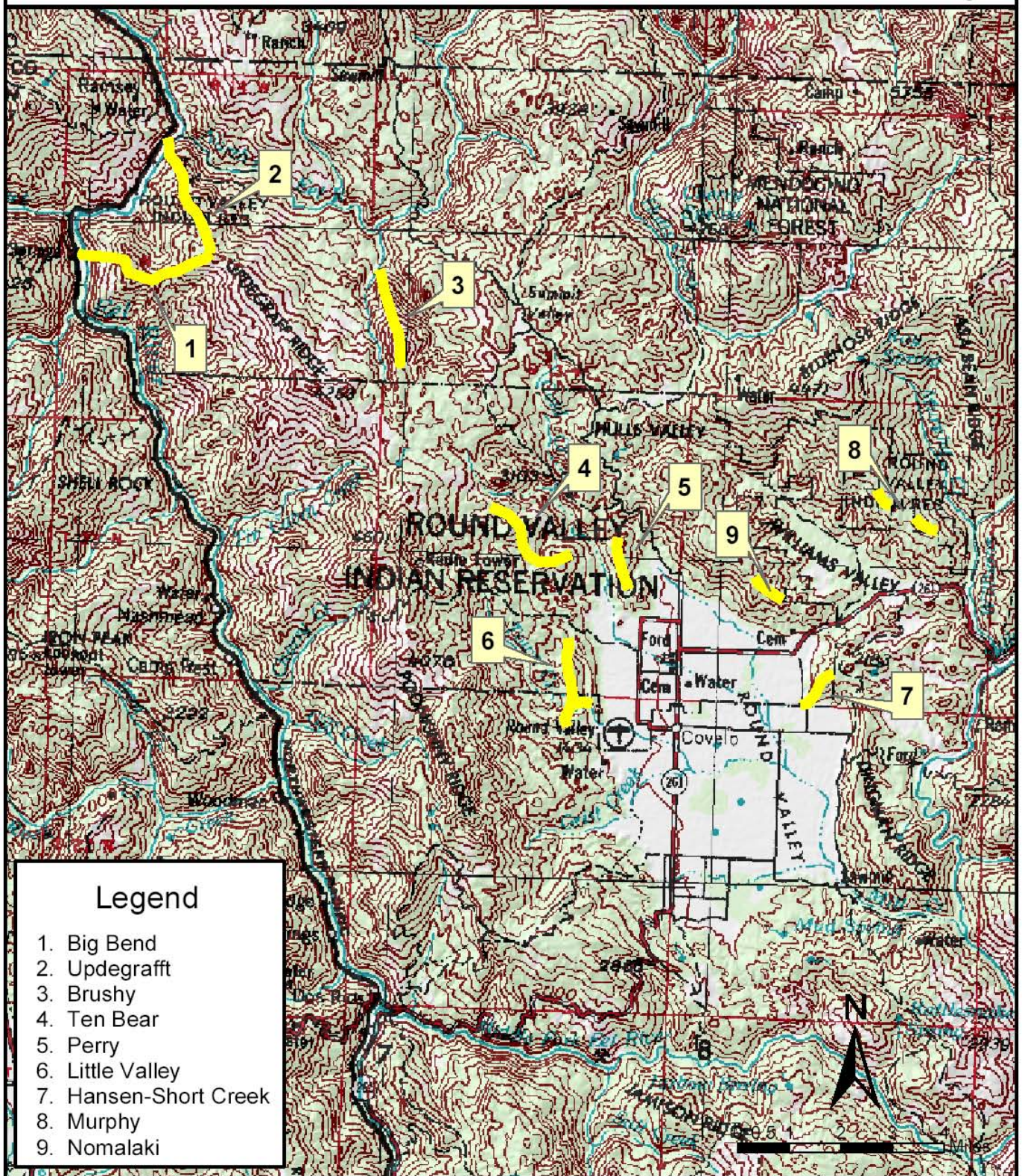
Residents noted that Round Valley, a basin surrounded by mountains, historically traps smoke from wildfires even dozens of miles away. The potential for soil erosion after a fire, loss of power due to only one electric transmission line, and difficulty in evacuation were concerns expressed by several persons. The Eel River Forest Service Station was named as an historic building to be protected. Further ideas and needs expressed by attendees are as follows:

- Public Education about defending homes: need community involvement, fire prevention inspections, and expansion of the existing Round Valley Disaster Action Team program, Red Cross, Office of Emergency Services, and Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)
- Fuel Reduction: need control burns, fuel breaks, and thinning of trees
- Water: need more storage, installation of hydrants with generator backups on pumps, and distribution of fire hoses to each ranch or resident with fire department accessible water supply
- Evacuation: need evacuation plan, improved escape routes, and address posting



# Covelo Battalion

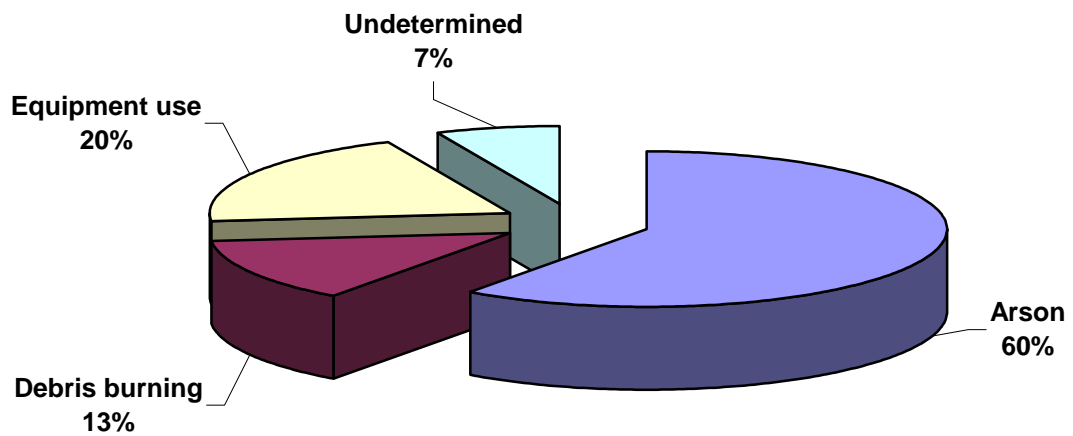
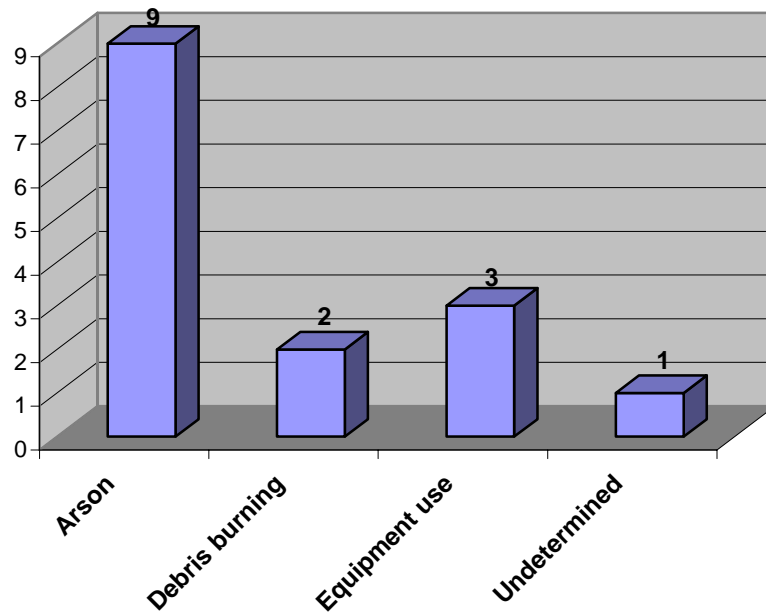
## Fuel Reduction Projects





## Battalion 1 Fire Cause 2004

Total Fires: 15



## **CDF BATTALION 2 / PLANNING ZONE 1: WILLITS**

CDF's Willits Battalion encompasses 384 square miles and 245,636 acres of State Responsibility Area. State Highway 101 bisects the Battalion, with predominately redwood and Douglas-fir forest to the west and mixed pine forest, brush, and grassland to the east. Highway 20 goes west from Willits to Fort Bragg, leaving the Willits Battalion 13 miles west of Willits. Highway 20 co-joins Highway 101 in Willits and goes south, leaving the Battalion in Redwood Valley. The eastern border of the Battalion is the Mendocino National Forest's Covelo and Upper Lake Districts.

One CDF Fire station, Howard Forest, co-located with Unit Headquarters, provides the initial ground attack fire protection for Battalion 2. The fire complement of the station consists of two Incident Command System (ICS) Type 3 fire engines plus one reserve Type 3 engine, a Type 2 bulldozer unit, and a Mendocino County Hazardous Materials Response vehicle. One fire lookout facility, Two Rock, closed in 1994, is no longer funded for staff or maintenance, and is suffering the effects of weather and vandalism.

In addition to their fire protection work, Battalion 2 personnel assist with various functions relative to the operation of Unit Headquarters facilities. These facilities include the Unit's Administrative Headquarters, Helitack Base, Training Center, Resource Protection and Prevention Bureau offices, Logistics Service Center, Automotive Fleet Maintenance shops, state-of-the-art breathing apparatus maintenance facility, the County's Emergency Command Center, and Howard Park, which is open to the public. Howard Forest fire station personnel often provide fuel, meals, lodging, and other services to the many CDF guests and employees who use these Unit facilities year-round. They also provide rescue and medical aid mutual response in the battalion, including to dozens of traffic accidents on Highway 101 each year.

A combination paid-volunteer fire department, the Little Lake Fire Protection District, provides municipal fire protection coverage to the District boundaries, including the city of Willits. Additionally, one volunteer fire department, Brooktrails Township Fire Department, protects improvements in the Brooktrails Township, Sylvandale, and Spring Creek subdivisions. These two fire departments provide mutual aid initial attack to State Responsibility Area fires in the Willits Battalion. The city of Willits and the surrounding Little Lake Valley are in Local Responsibility Area protection. The community of Brooktrails has 1,488 dwellings in State Responsibility Area wildland and is at major risk of a significant dollar loss vegetation fire. The area of Pine Mountain to the east has 304 homes and is similarly at risk. Both of these areas will be discussed later.

The Battalion overlays Willits, the only incorporated city, several unincorporated communities of various sizes, two high schools, and five grade schools. The future outlook

is for increased tourist traffic and increasing rural housing subdivisions. Golf resort expansion planned for the Fort Bragg area, reasonable local housing prices, and coastal recreation areas accessed via Highway 20 from Highway 101 in Willits keep the area a thriving crossroads and desirable place to reside. As the subdivisions expand, particularly Brooktrails and the unincorporated areas around Willits, an increasing fire problem exists in both the prevention and suppression of fires. As noted in the statistics, the increase in traffic will cause an increase in vehicle fire and medical aid responses and a need to increase public awareness of fire hazards and fire prevention.

Miles of overhead power lines, a continuing source of vegetation fire starts, accompany ongoing building in the wildland. An option to eliminate this persistent threat for vegetation fires would be community planning requiring underground utility service. This would nicely complement Public Resources Code 4290 regulations that are currently being implemented for new rural construction.

Area logging is decreasing due to the economy, environmental concerns and opinion differences. Current harvest plans are mixed between small and large acreage. With fewer logging operations the cumulative fire hazard from logging slash buildup increases only slightly annually in comparison to the buildup created during past boom logging eras. Additionally, the threat of fire starts in the remote backcountry from logging operations is reduced.

## **COLLABORATION**

Partners cooperating in the development of the content of this Battalion 2 Plan include the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Mendocino County Sheriff's Office, Little Lake Fire Protection District, Brooktrails Township Fire Department, Mendocino County Fire Safe Council, Mendocino County Air Quality Management District, Brooktrails, Sylvandale & Spring Creek Fire Safe Council, Pine Mountain Fire Safe Council, Williams Ranch Road Association, and the Sherwood Valley Rancheria.

Events such as the Brooktrails Fire Department annual tabletop exercise; Hearst community meetings; Mendocino County Fire Safe Council meetings and community outreach events; Brooktrails, Spring Creek & Sylvandale Fire Safe Council meetings; Pine Mountain Fire Safe Council meetings; Williams Ranch Road Association meetings; Spring Creek Road Association efforts; CDF-Fire Battalion Two Fire Safe Council Forum meetings; and Sherwood Valley Rancheria Fire Crew formation and work project proposal assembly have all played a part in defining this plan. Additionally contributions from individual community members, business owners, and involved citizens cannot be overlooked, for their efforts are in integral part of the direction for the plan.



All potential natural hazards that may impact the community infrastructure are of concern to the participants, such as vegetation fires, storms, flooding, and earthquakes. ***Area residents have consistently voiced the greatest concern about the threat to life and property from wildland vegetation fires. The threat is an annually recurring, consistent theme that stakeholders recognize must be addressed because we choose to live and work in this fire prone environment.*** Broadly, all issues related to fire are of concern, such as fire planning (including mapping, signage, staging areas, and safety zones), evacuation, defensible space, water supplies, community education, and communications.

## **ASSETS AT RISK**

Stakeholders at the Battalion 2 community meeting in April 2005 prioritized the actual Wildland-Urban Interface communities as the greatest assets at risk. These communities include but are not exclusive to:

- Willits
- Brooktrails
- Sherwood Valley (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Gates)
- Sylvandale
- Spring Creek
- Pine Mountain
- Hearst
- Ridgewood
- Subdivisions in the areas of the Williams Ranch, Sherwood Rancheria, Shaffer Ranch, Muir Mill Road, Irmulco, String Creek, Hilltop Road, Foster Mountain, Canyon Road, and Tomki Road

Ranking priorities for mitigation involves population density in the actual Intermix zone of wildland and dwellings.

## **THE FIRE SITUATION**

### **General Description of the Present**

A Vegetation Management Program (VMP), as we have historically experienced it, with CDF-Fire leading the charge in coordinating contractual efforts, providing staff funding, establishing control lines, providing the firing equipment, and actually doing the burning, is no longer being done. Historically, Battalion Fire Prevention Plans included VMP activity in the Brooktrails Community Services District, and several thousand acres of vegetation management burns in Eden Valley and surrounding the Little Lake area. Within the last four years none of those plans has come to fruition. The identified areas are still primary targets, but the program of the past is not currently adequately funded to permit VMP burning. Limited public tolerance for residual smoke laden air, plus conflicting environmental

concerns for air quality, wildlife, and fish, have significantly closed the window of opportunity for VMP burning.

### **The Desired Future Condition**

Fire is widely recognized as a natural part of the California environment. Ecologically, studies have demonstrated wildlife's dependence on, and rapid recovery from, vegetation fires without funds being expended for regeneration. Much of the Willits Battalion would benefit from prescribed burning. Prescribed fires are far less costly than an uncontrolled fire burning through a developed community that will be costly to rebuild. The efficient burning of wildland tracts would provide an effective reduction of fuel loading in high, very high, and extreme fire hazard severity zones. However, this will not happen until vegetation management burning once again becomes a public priority and policy that supersedes the current and effective limiting concerns.

### **Ignition Workload Assessment: Brooktrails Fuels Management**

The Brooktrails Township is an unincorporated community located immediately northwest of the City of Willits. This steep and wooded area was noted as being the first community in the United States to blend a four square mile redwood and mixed growth forest conservation park with a fully improved residential subdivision. The conservation park is now called the Brooktrails Redwood Park and is locally referred to as the "Greenbelt." The park covers 2,300 acres that border a large portion of the lots in the subdivision. The Brooktrails Township is comprised of multiple subdivisions. Three main areas, Brooktrails, Sylvandale, and Spring Creek, are the most heavily populated. The entire 7,773 acre forested development contains 6,710 parcels and 1,488 dwellings.

In the event of a large fire in or threatening the Brooktrails subdivisions, the 4,194 residents and responding agencies could face many problems. Many homes are surrounded by overgrown, undeveloped lots and border the unimproved areas of the Redwood Park or "Greenbelt." Fires could easily carry from the grassy openings and chaparral brush fields to the mixed canopy forests. Heavy accumulation of dead and down logging slash caused by years of timber harvesting would further hinder firefighting efforts and enhance fire spotting potential.

Residents fleeing down steep and narrow roads could impede responding fire apparatus, causing road blockage and long response times for fire personnel. Evacuation concerns are compounded by the fact that the narrow, winding Sherwood Road is the only paved major access road and escape route from Brooktrails, Sylvandale, and Spring Creek.

## **Vegetative Wildland Fuels and Structure Fuels**

The Brooktrails Township Community Services District, which owns the forested Greenbelt around the community, as well as the members of the Brooktrails, Sylvandale, & Spring Creek Fire Safe Council and the Pine Mountain Fire Safe Council, have long recognized that they live in an area classified by CDF as a “Very High” fire severity zone. Many other Intermix areas of the Battalion are also classified as “Very High.”

The Brooktrails Township subdivisions are some of the densest wildland intermix developments in Mendocino County. The limited access, steep slopes, and roads and dwellings interspersed with undeveloped, overgrown parcels surrounded by a natural Greenbelt environment, offer the potential for expensive and large losses to wildland fire. The unincorporated community is subject to Public Resources Code 4290 requirements for new development.

## **Frequency of Severe Fire Weather**

The saving grace for the area inland of the California north coastal strip is the seasonal onshore marine push which usually keeps overnight relative humidity high during normal patterns. The occasional interior high pressure systems that established conditions for the 1991 Oakland Hills Fire and the 1997 Marin County Vision Fire create the same pattern in Mendocino County over the Willits area. Unlike the localities for the two fires mentioned above, the Willits area is 30 miles inland and does not enjoy the ample moisture recovery of Oakland and Inverness. When interior high pressure conditions develop, producing hot, dry north/northeast offshore winds, there is abundant potential for severe fires in the Willits area. These critical weather patterns typically develop four to five each fire season. Each spell usually builds and dissipates within five days.

## **PROJECTS**

Between 2001 and 2004 a federally funded State Fire Assistance (SFA) Wildland Urban Interface grant supported 141 acres of fuel modification on Brooktrails Community Service District Greenbelt properties, plus public education. Although land clearing work was completed in December 2003, our public education component (community fire prevention/fire safe council meetings, media releases, and public contacts) continues to pay dividends by increasing the public's awareness of their obligation to take action to protect their own communities.

## **Ongoing Prevention Activities**

- Cooperation with the Mendocino County Fire Safe Council in holding community outreach events to gather stakeholder input on “assets at risk”

- Participation in school programs emphasizing home and fire safety
- Participation in the annual Brooktrails Fire Department tabletop disaster drill and Willits July 4<sup>th</sup> parade
- Distribution of 8,300 LE-38 style wildfire prevention flyers to residents in the greater Willits and Laytonville areas in cooperation with Coast To Coast Hardware in Willits, the County Fire Safe Council, and the Little Lake and Brooktrails fire departments
- Maintaining and improving working relationships with local government fire protection agencies and the Brooktrails, Sylvandale, and Spring Creek and Pine Mountain Fire Safe Councils; ongoing fire prevention efforts and Fire Safe Council forums in cooperation with Williams Ranch Road Association and the Hearst and Irmulco communities
- Installation of roadside Fire Prevention signs
- LE-38 home and mill site inspections
- Establishing a pool of CDF Volunteers in Prevention

## **Future Projects**

The Bureau of Land Management has recently approved funding requested by the Mendocino County Fire Safe Council, for development in 2006 of a Fire Plan for the Brooktrails, Sylvandale, and Spring Creek areas. The emerging plan will promote community awareness, education and *implementation* of various methods of fuel reduction, including education about prescribed burning for fuel hazard reduction, which could be utilized on public and private lands. The plan will address protection of community-identified assets at risk, identification and accurate mapping of access roads and evacuation routes, and the clearance and maintenance of these corridors.

- Pine Mountain Fire Safe Council: Addressing, signage, road clearing, and defensible space
- Irmulco and Williams Ranch Subdivisions: Establishment of Fire Safe Councils
- Brooktrails Township: Continued development of a “Greenbelt Management Plan”

## **INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES**

Almost all the work that has produced action to date is due to grassroots efforts of community and business members who recognize the threat of wildland fire and its associated needs for planning, mapping, defensible space, public awareness and education, and the proactive effort needed for pre-fire activities. These community members have volunteered their time and limited resources to coordinate community meetings, develop Fire Safe Councils, and consider ways to protect water resources, improve communications during a crisis, produce detailed community maps, and generally provide the catalyst for further society involvement. They have proven willing to work with the fire agencies to develop meaningful and active action plans to advance community safety beyond the levels which agency staffing and funding levels allow.

Funding sources that assist the community to see a return on their personal investment by being able to defend their lives and property from a firestorm or other natural disaster, to establish defensible space to permit safely sheltering-in-place or to have adequate communications and escape routes to evacuate to identified safe areas, and to save community water supply infrastructure assets – all these will be pennies on the dollar due to damage from fire losses.

## **FIRE SAFE COUNCIL COMMUNITY MEETING IN BATTALION 2**

Thirty-three persons filled the Brooktrails Fire Department training room for the April 20<sup>th</sup> community Fire Plan meeting, hosted by Chief Daryl Schoeppner and Captain Jon Noyer and facilitated by CDF Battalion Chief Mark Tolbert and MCFSC President George Britton. The communities represented were primarily Brooktrails, Sylvandale, Spring Creek, and Pine Mountain. Participants included Chief Jeff Smith of the Little Lake Fire District, numerous personnel from CDF and the Brooktrails Fire Department, Tony Orth (President) and Mary Ziady of the Brooktrails Township Community Services District Board of Directors, and Mike Chapman, BTCSD General Manager.

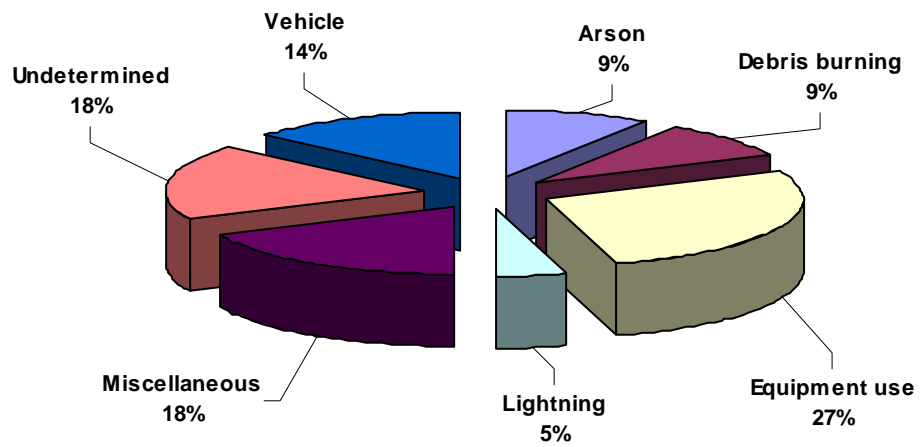
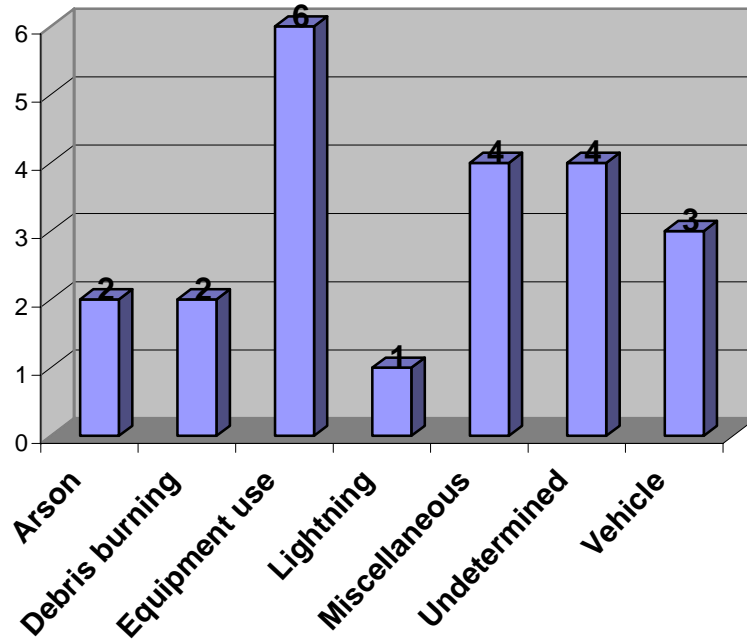
The above Battalion report ably describes the overall Battalion 2 situation. Here is a recap of the concerns and ideas raised during the meeting, in attendees' own words:

- Prepare for communication and alerts during a wildfire
- Create easy-to-use evacuation checklist: What to do and where to go?
- Educate for emergency preparedness: Shelter in place or evacuate?
- Pre-identify and mark escape routes and evacuation collection areas
- Create safety zones, including at Ells Field Airport (located in Brooktrails)
- Improve street and address signs, and create better maps
- Plan to assist disabled persons
- Plan for animal evacuation: horses, pets, other animals
- Clear underbrush and grass around homes, along escape routes, and in Greenbelt
- Create fuel breaks
- Protect water supply, water tanks and lakes, and water plant
- Remove trees near ponds so helicopters can dip from them



## Battalion 2 Fire Cause 2004

Total Fires: 22



## **CDF BATTALION 3 / PLANNING ZONE 2: UKIAH**

Battalion 3 encompasses a wide variety of vegetative fuel types and a vast array of populations. Its boundaries reach south to the Sonoma County line, north to the Mendocino National Forest, west to the redwoods of Montgomery Woods State Park, and east to the Lake County line. The Battalion includes two main state highways: Highway 101 traveling north and south and Highway 20 east and west. Both of these see heavy traffic, especially during the summer tourist season. An increase in county population means the traffic continues to increase as well.



CDF-Fire protection for the Ukiah Battalion is provided by two Schedule B (Amador) fire stations. The Hopland station, located on Highway 101 two miles north of Hopland, is a single engine station covering the southern half of the battalion. The Ukiah station, located at the intersection of North State Street and Hensley Creek Road, has two engines and one medium dozer and covers the northern half. During

2005 and 2006 the old Ukiah facility is being replaced with a new one at the same location, and CDF personnel are temporarily responding from a former fire station at North State Street and Highway 101, in conjunction with the Ukiah Valley Fire District, which is renting the facility.

Battalion 3 provides emergency services in the City of Ukiah and the entire Ukiah Valley area, and the communities of Hopland, Redwood Valley, and Potter Valley. Local and federal governments also provide fire and medical services within Battalion 3: Ukiah City Fire Department, Ukiah Valley Fire District, Hopland Volunteer Fire Department, Potter Valley Volunteer Fire Department, Redwood Valley/Calpella Fire District, and the U.S. Forest Service. CDF continues to have a fantastic working relationship with all of these fire agencies, including formal training and other assistance.

The Battalion's working relationship with other public service agencies -- such as the California Highway Patrol, Mendocino County Sheriff's Office, Ukiah Police Department, Ukiah Ambulance Service, Redwood Empire Hazardous Incident Team (REHIT), Tribal

police agencies, CalTrans, Bureau of Land Management, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers -- is also exemplary, due to the strong commitment and dedication of Battalion 3's personnel.

During fire season, the Ukiah station has automatic aid agreements with the Ukiah Valley Fire District, Ukiah City Fire, and Redwood Valley/Calpella Fire. Battalion personnel work especially closely with the Ukiah Valley District, sharing a fire station and providing fire, rescue, and emergency medical services to the District's northern half. CDF also provides direct protection to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Lake Mendocino Recreation Area and BLM's Cow Mountain and Red Mountain Recreation Areas. The Hopland station has an automatic aid agreement with the Hopland Fire Department and responds to all calls within their protection area.

Several popular recreation and tourist locations within Battalion 3 attract visitors from near and far and cause a large influx of people, especially during fire season. These include the above-mentioned Lake Mendocino, Cow Mountain, and Red Mountain Recreation Areas, plus Montgomery Woods State Park, the Russian River, Eel River, numerous wineries, and the adjacent Mendocino National Forest, all of which bring the public into direct contact with wildland interface areas. In addition, growth of subdivisions and businesses within the Ukiah Valley and Hopland areas is greatly increasing the probability of wildland-interface fires.

## **BATTALION 3 ACREAGE**

- State Responsibility Area: 389,591 acres
- Local Responsibility Area: 150,808 acres
- Direct Protection Area (non-SRA): 30,999 acres

## **BATTALION 3 FIRE PREVENTION ACTIVITIES**



Battalion 3 places very strong emphasis on fire prevention education and activities. Smokey Bear has long been a familiar sight in the Battalion, and in 2004 Sparky the Fire Dog and Pluggie the Fire Hydrant were added to the Battalion's Fire Prevention program. Pluggie, operated by a firefighter by remote control, rolls around and talks interactively with children and adults about fire safety, and occasionally squirts water -- much to the delight of the crowds. The 3-

foot-tall Pluggie is especially good with small children, as he is "just their size."

The team of Smokey, Sparky, and Pluggie, led by Captain Brian Kornegay, has made many successful appearances at schools, fairs, conferences, campfire programs, and parades. Captain Kornegay keeps on hand a supply of fire prevention materials such as plastic fire chiefs hats, stickers, and coloring books.

The full scope of prevention activities in Battalion 3 includes these:

- Participation in school programs emphasizing home and fire safety
- Attending community meetings within the Battalion to teach about wildfire safety
- Actively working with the countywide and local Fire Safe Councils
- Participation in multi-agency Fire Prevention Week activities in October
- Organization and participation in parades to promote fire safety
- Staffing of booths at the Redwood Empire Fair and Redwood Region Logging Conference
- Working closely with news media to spread the Fire Prevention and Fire Safe message
- Placing and rebuilding roadside Fire Prevention signs
- Issuing burn permits in person, with strong emphasis on safety and awareness of state and local Fire laws and regulations
- Monitoring CalTrans mowing projects along Highway 101 and Highway 20
- Performing LE-38 inspections on power lines
- Aggressively performing LE-38 inspections on homes, with strong emphasis on areas where high wildfire probability exists, including these:
  - Oak Knoll/Spanish Canyon areas on Ukiah's southwest side
  - Rogina Heights, Deerwood, and El Dorado subdivisions on Ukiah's east side
  - Greenfield Ranch, northwest of Ukiah
  - Black Bart Trail and Cave Creek subdivision in Redwood Valley
  - Mid-Mountain Ranch in Potter Valley
  - McNab Ranch and Russian River Estates in the Hopland area
- Maintaining the Ukiah West Side Shaded Fuel Break. Emphasis will be on cooperating with the landowners and having them assist with maintaining their portions of the break.
- Continuing to be an integral part of all communities within Battalion 3 by attending parades, home shows, health fairs, exhibitions, and other community events.





## VEGETATION MANAGEMENT PROGRAM (VMP) ACTIVITIES

### Ukiah West Side VMP

This three-phase vegetation management project was conducted in the hills on the west side of the Ukiah Valley, funded by the State Fire Assistance Wildland Urban Interface grant program. These hills have experienced large-scale fires since the turn of the century, with major fires occurring in 1950 and 1959. The City of Ukiah's encroachment into these hills since then has created the significant probability of a very destructive wildland interface fire.



The three planned phases were these, to be completed by the end of 2003:

1. Seven miles of shaded fuel breaks to separate the housing encroachment from brush fields, completed in December 2003.
2. Fifteen miles of mechanically constructed fire breaks within the brush fields, to compartmentalize the fields. Only a portion of this phase has been completed to date.
3. Mosaic helitorch burning of 1,500 acres of southern slopes, within the approximate 7,500 acres of brush fields, to reduce fuel loading in the chaparral fields by a targeted 25%. This burning was cancelled, partially due to fears of escaping fires.



Although all phases were not completed, the shaded fuel break has greatly reduced the fuel loading along this interface line, reducing the scope and damage of a possible interface fire spreading from the hills into the west side of Ukiah.



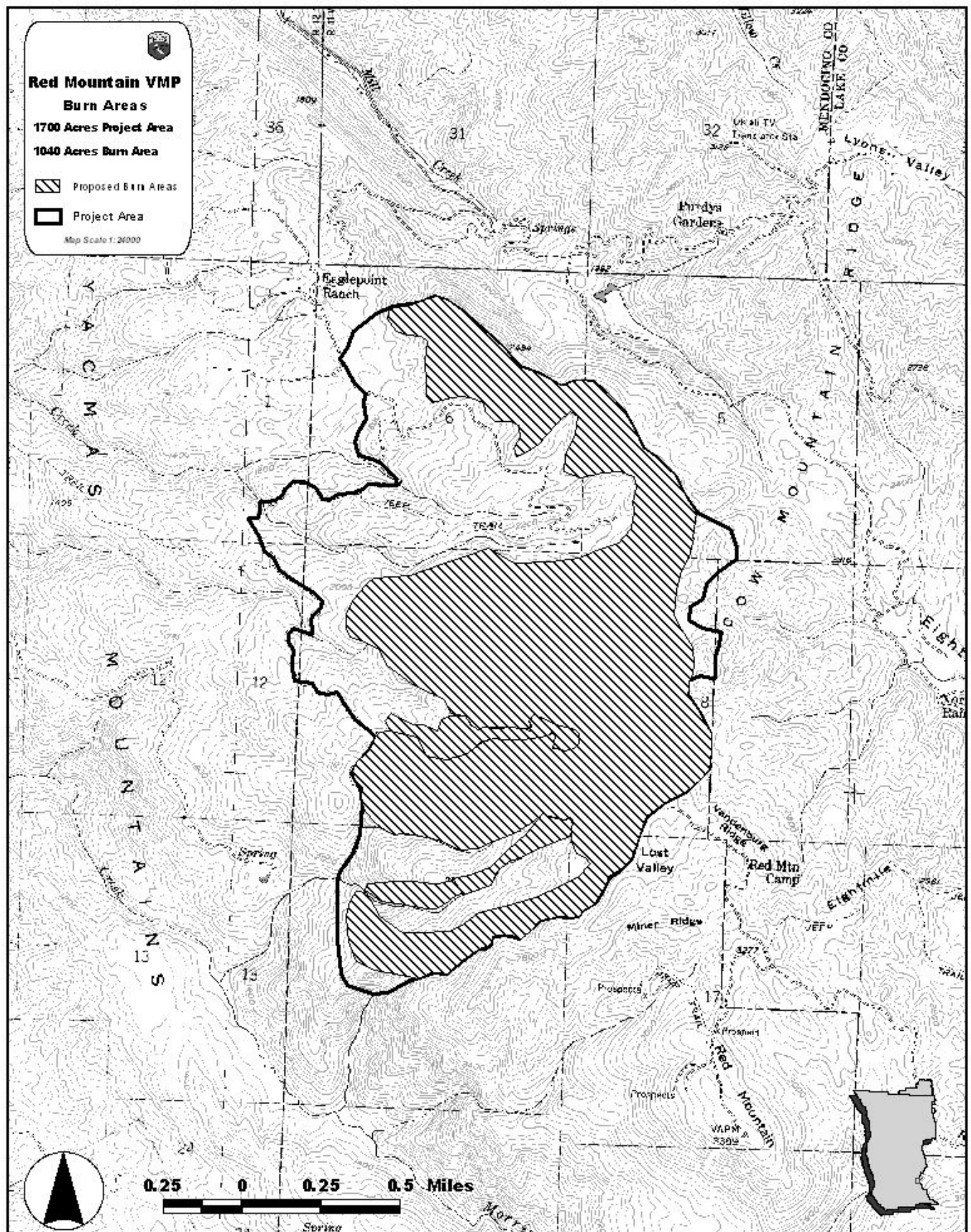
## **Hopland Field Station Studies, with the BLM Red Mountain VMP**

This project was created to assist the Bureau of Land Management and the University of California in conducting prescribed fire treatments for a three-year chaparral research study. In Fiscal Year 2001, the Joint Fire Sciences Program provided \$95,560 to study the efficacy of prescribed burning and mechanical methods in reducing the fire hazard in chaparral. This research project was designed to assess the effects of treatments on (1) fire hazard reduction, (2) recovery of vegetation and ecosystem function, and (3) resurgence of the fuels, and to determine the costs of the different treatments.

The nature of this research project required 30 year or older chaparral. The Red Mountain area was selected based on past fire history, conformance with the management objectives of the Cow Mountain Recreation Area, and the high historical threat of wildfire starting east of Ukiah and running east into Lake County. Prescribed fire treatments were designed to break up fuel continuity to minimize wildfire spread as well as to protect the integrity of research plots from the damaging effects of a wildfire entering the project area. Two private landowners were included in this project in order to strategically break up fuel continuity associated with Mill Creek Road, the main access route to Cow Mountain, which has been the location of many arson fires in the past. The total project area is 1,700 acres, and 700 acres are planned for prescribed fire treatment.

The three phases of the project are these:

- 1) A helitorch, a helicopter-mounted operation to set controlled fires, was used to establish and reinforce perimeter and interior lines in mosaic burns in Spring of 2002.
- 2) Ten research units have been hand-fired (by on-the-ground crews) or mechanically treated since the perimeter lines were established. The plots average 5 to 10 acres in size and are locations of long-term monitoring.
- 3) Helitorch or hand firing operations will be used to clean up any remaining high hazard chaparral areas within the project area through the implementation of mosaic burns.



## **Pyramid Ridge VMP / Knob Cone Pine Study**

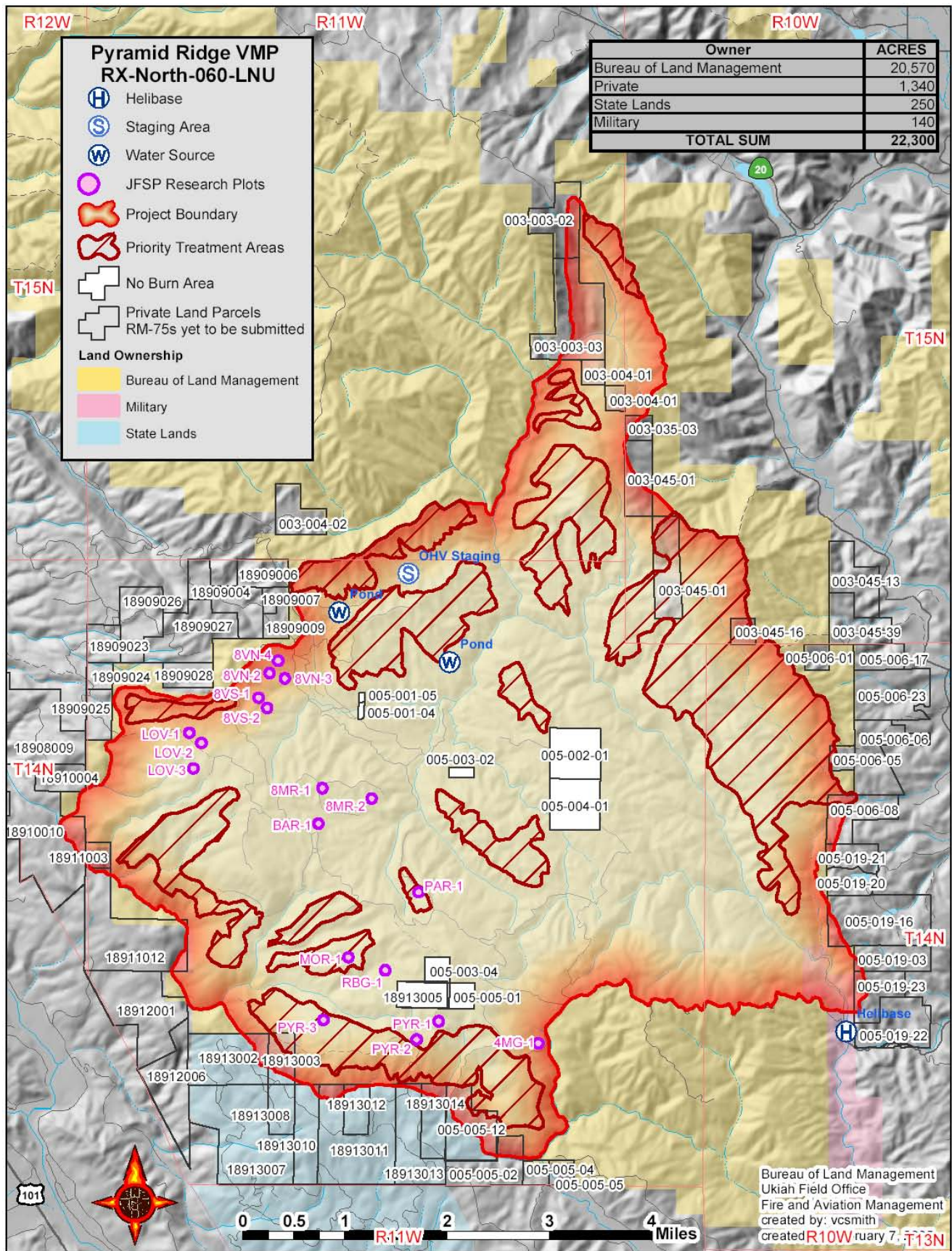
This project is much like that of Red Mountain and is also funded by the Joint Fire Sciences Program. The current research, involving CDF, BLM, and the University of California at Berkeley, includes treating 18 plots, 3-10 acres in size, of knob cone pines that are dying off for an unknown reason. The treatment was to take place in both the Spring & Fall of 2005, the last funded year, and to include burning 3 plots of standing knob cone pine, burning 3 plots of cut knob cone pine, and cutting and letting rot 3 of the plots. It was impossible to perform the Spring burns due to very wet weather, but the Fall burns were accomplished in November 2005. CDF is responsible for all this burning.

The Pyramid Ridge project also gives an opportunity to conduct broadcast burns of brush to facilitate perimeter control and fuel reduction throughout the fire corridor on Cow Mountain between Ukiah and Lakeport to the east. The total proposed project size is approximately 22,300 acres spread across Mendocino and Lake Counties.

## **North Cow Mountain VMP (2009)**

The project will develop a burn plan for the northern area of Cow Mountain under CDF's Vegetation Management Program. The burn plan will be implemented in subsequent years. Fuel breaks in the fire-prone upper Mill Creek Road area may be part of this project.





## **FIRE SAFE COUNCIL COMMUNITY MEETINGS IN BATTALION 3**

The Fire Safe Council sponsored three productive outreach meetings during March and April 2005, in Ukiah, Hopland, and Redwood Valley.

### **Ukiah Community Meeting**

The great majority of the 33 attendees at the Ukiah meeting live on Robinson Creek Road, southwest of Ukiah, and all the Assets at Risk forms completed by attendees were from this area. This turnout was due to the energetic efforts of Robinson Creek residents Lillian Hoika and Sheryl Greene, who continue to spearhead Fire Safe work in the area. Todd Derum, at that time CDF Battalion 3 Chief, and Stephen Smith, District Conservationist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, ably co-facilitated the meeting.

The main concern of this group is basic: surviving a wildfire. Their one primary road and its offshoots, which follow Robinson Creek up a narrow canyon, is in places barely one lane wide. Widening the road would be extremely difficult: in many places the road could not be widened without dynamiting the steep rock hillsides that already litter the road with rocks. Ideas given at the meeting are these, in attendees' words:

- Vegetative fuels reduction needed (14 responses): brush along roads and around homes, dead trees throughout the area, some resulting from past ice storm; need for control burns and chipping to dispose of excess vegetation
- Neighborhood awareness of strangers on roads and youth partying along creek
- Education re: fire safe building construction, existence of hazardous materials, and safe use of burn piles
- Community notification / phone tree system in event of wildfire
- Evacuation plan and use of safety zones: location of escape routes, creation of turnouts along narrow roads, identification and creation of safety zones for situations where evacuation is impossible, identification of persons who would need help escaping from their homes
- Fire suppression: creation and identification of water supply, and assurance of CDF air tanker availability

Subsequent to the meeting, Ms. Hoika requested that CDF personnel drive their roads and recommend the best course of action to save lives in a wildfire. Captain Brian Kornegay did so, and at an educational meeting on Robinson Creek Road in May 2005 he confirmed the residents' intuition that creation and utilization of safety zones throughout the area would be their best course of action. Upon the request of Ms. Hoika, and with input from CDF personnel, the MCFSC prepared an information sheet on creating such safety zones.



Recognizing that communication and education are crucial, Ms. Hoika and Ms. Greene are creating a phone tree for the Robinson Creek canyon and have distributed fire safe literature to all residents. In addition, Bill Stambaugh has created a detailed map showing road addresses and fire and flood history, for use by residents and emergency personnel.

### **Hopland Community Meeting**

Attendance was light but enthusiastic, with McNab Ranch and County Road 110 residents present, at this meeting hosted by Steve Leonard, Hopland's Assistant Fire Chief. As is true in most of the county, a primary concern is roads too narrow to allow residents to exit while fire equipment is entering. McNab Ranch, northwest of Hopland, has been the location of numerous wildfires and is one of the county's primary wildfire concerns due to its difficult terrain, precipitous roads, and the prevalence of light, flashy fuels. Other concerns and ideas:

- Vegetation: Need to clear brush and overhanging trees near structures; need financial assistance for this work.
- Roads: Clear brush next to roadways, protect wooden bridges, and decide whether to evacuate or shelter in place.
- Communication: Create communication network or phone tree, know who and where neighbors are, watch for persons tossing cigarette butts from cars, and educate residents about fire danger.
- Fire suppression: Keep CDF air tankers and helicopters available, and possibly have a fire engine located on McNab Ranch.
- Water supply: Develop surplus water for fire protection, and make sure firefighters know locations of ponds, tanks, and hydrants.

Notable regarding the Hopland area is that two grant proposals have been developed, one of which was already successful: (1) The Fire Safe Council has been awarded \$22,250 of BLM funding for defensible space clearing and a fuel break to be performed in 2006 on the Hopland Band of Pomo Indians lands southeast of Hopland. (2) The Council has requested funding for road signage and mapping for McNab Ranch.

### **Redwood Valley Community Meeting**

"Small but mighty" describes both the group attending this meeting and the fruits it has borne. Hosted by Chief Tom Hession of the Redwood Valley/Calpella Fire District, the group included a Registered Professional Forester and County Planning Commissioner, a retired County Sheriff, several young firefighters, and other key fire-conscious residents.

Two areas were identified as at greatest risk of loss of life in a wildfire. Cave Creek Ranch is a remote subdivision off Tomki Road beyond the northern end of the valley. Tomki was the

main road between Ukiah and Willits before Highway 101 was built, and the bandit Black Bart reportedly ambushed many a horse-drawn buggy along its treacherous curves! The paved portion of Tomki Road ends six miles out Tomki Canyon, at the entrance to the lower portion of Cave Creek Ranch. Thereafter the road features numerous rocky stream crossings with no bridges. Even in summer when the stream is dry, a very sturdy vehicle is necessary to navigate the road. Evacuation is therefore a major concern.

The second area at serious risk is Greenfield Ranch, located in the hills west of Highway 101 and spanning both the Redwood Valley and Ukiah Valley Fire Districts. Its remote location, flashy fuels, and sparse roads also make for high fire danger and a potential evacuation nightmare. A final need for the Redwood Valley area was identified as “personnel and funds for the fire department.”

Two activities resulted from this meeting to address these concerns.

(1) Responding to the stated need for funds, local musician Paula Samonte, in conjunction with the Fire Safe Council, produced and presented a jazz concert in June to benefit the Redwood Valley/Calpella Fire District. Ms. Samonte successfully solicited donations to cover all the concert’s expenses, and clear ticket sales proceeds of over \$1,500 were presented to Chief Hession at the annual Redwood Valley Fire District Barbeque in July.

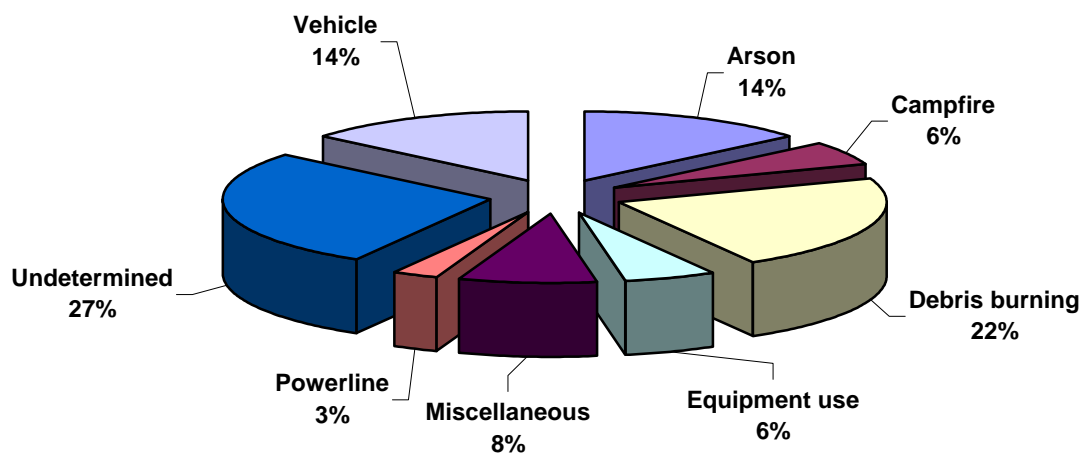
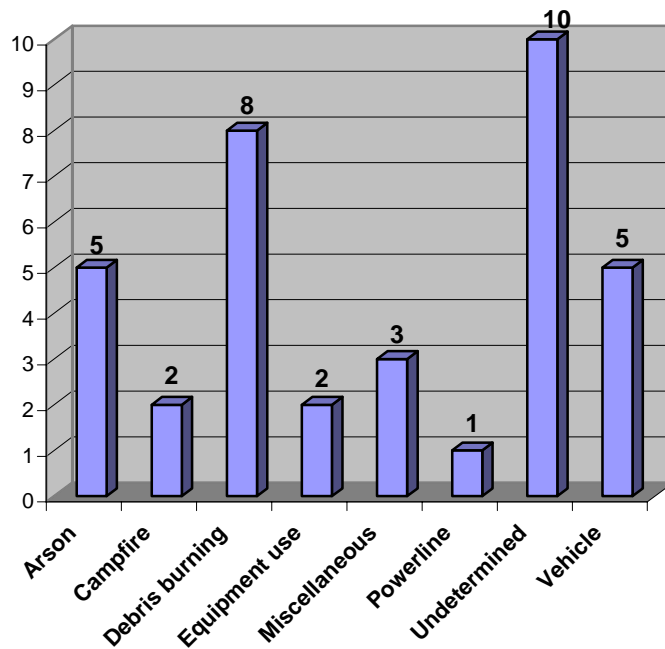
(2) Recognizing the severe evacuation issues, Chief Hession and then-CDF Battalion Chief Bob Rodello overflowed Cave Creek and Greenfield Ranch to identify where safety zones might be created. The chiefs made plans to prepare these areas, educate residents about the realities of evacuation and the locations of the safety zones, and sponsor an event during which residents would practice traveling to their safety zones.

Other concerns, ideas, and priorities identified by Redwood Valley attendees are:

- Water: Need increased water storage for fire suppression
- Fuels: Need vegetation reduction in high hazard areas – and funding to perform it
- Education: Need to instruct residents – including youths on motor bikes -- about fire danger and ignition hazards, to post more signs indicating high fire hazard, and to organize residents to join together and implement fire safe measures

# Battalion 3 Fire Cause 2004

## Total Fires: 36



## **CDF BATTALION 4 / PLANNING ZONE 1: LAYTONVILLE**

The Laytonville Battalion encompasses approximately 650 square miles, or about 416,000 acres, of State Responsibility Area in the northwest portion of Mendocino County. The Battalion has two major highway corridors: State Highway 1 runs through the northwest corner of the Battalion, where it intersects U.S. Highway 101; and Highway 101 runs the entire length of the Battalion, a distance of 42 miles.

CDF operates two 2-engine fire stations within the Battalion, at Laytonville and Leggett. Year-round fire protection in the Battalion is provided by four volunteer departments: Long Valley (Laytonville), Leggett Valley, Piercy, and Whale Gulch. The Whale Gulch Fire Department is located within Mendocino County but is dispatched by the CDF Humboldt-Del Norte Unit because the road to its location is in Humboldt County.

The Battalion includes eight communities of various sizes, with two high schools and three grade schools. Services in the communities range from full time to seasonal -- restaurants, motels, fuel, and grocery stores -- to no services in some areas. Several private camps are occupied primarily during the summer months. The State Parks System operates two campground facilities, one of which is classified as a wilderness park, plus three other day use areas. The Nature Conservancy has a large holding known as the Coast Range Preserve in the Branscomb area. There are several BLM holdings in the Battalion, most of which require modified suppression action plans.

### **COLLABORATION**

Three community meetings sponsored by the Mendocino County Fire Safe Council, the Long Valley Fire Protection District, Leggett Valley Fire Protection District, Piercy Volunteer Fire Department, and CDF were held in April 2005 to gather input from community stakeholders. Attendees identified several areas of concern throughout the Battalion, including but not limited to defensible space clearance around structures and power lines, water source development, road signage, home addressing, fire prevention education, and vegetation management/fuel reduction. More details about these meetings are at the end of this report.

The larger Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) areas identified during these meetings include Bear Pen subdivision, Cooks Valley, Pepperwood Springs subdivision, Ebert Lane, Camp Saint Michael, Bell Springs Road, Cherry Creek subdivision, Twin Pines Ranch, Black Oak Ranch, Spy Rock Road area, Wilderness Lodge, Ten Mile Creek, Fox Rock Road, and Mulligan Lane. A complete list of Battalion 4's identified WUIs is found in Appendix B.

## **LOCAL FIRE PROBLEM**

Fires caused by debris burning are a significant problem in Battalion 4. When a debris fire is discovered, a fire report is prepared, even if the fire has not escaped control, when these conditions exist: no permit was obtained, it is a no-burn day, or there is any other kind of non-compliance with burning regulations. An increased effort by Battalion personnel to inform the public of debris burning regulations will be used to reduce these fires. Fires caused by equipment use are also a problem. Battalion personnel conduct public education on this subject, but such fires will probably continue due to the large amount of outdoor equipment use in the Battalion.

Arson-caused fires increased from 2% of all the Battalion's wildfires in 2002 to 17% in 2003. The Unit's Fire Prevention Bureau is aware of this and investigates all fires. Playing with fire is also on the rise within the Battalion. Public education programs will address this, and if needed, the Unit's Fire Prevention Specialist will be asked to assist in Fire Prevention school programs on this issue. Local and state firefighters also need to be trained in dealing with juvenile fire-setters.

Although logging is decreasing, the fire threat relative to logging remains, due to the buildup of logging slash and the lack of access to the slash-covered areas due to road closures. Fires caused by the railroad have ceased because the railroad is not operating due to winter storm damage several years ago. When the railroad is again in service, a fire prevention and inspection program will need to be implemented.

The future outlook for Battalion 4 is for increased tourist traffic and more rural subdivisions. As these subdivisions expand, the need for prevention and suppression of debris, equipment, and vehicle fires will also increase, requiring greater public awareness of fire hazards.

## **PAST AND ONGOING PROJECTS**

The Laytonville Battalion has had nearly ten Vegetation Management Program (VMP) projects in the works since the early 1990's, but most have been canceled due to expired contracts and budget problems. These were to have been primarily broadcast burning projects in cooperation with local stakeholders, involving from a few hundred to a few thousand acres. The most recent projects within the Battalion are the Sinkyone VMP and the Cahto Indian Reservation thinning project.

The Sinkyone VMP is a joint project of CDF and the California Department of Parks and Recreation, located at the Sinkyone Wilderness State Park, in the far northwest corner of the Battalion. The primary objective is to return fire as a natural element in a marine terrace ecosystem. Benefits will include the control of exotic plant species, reduction of fuel

loading, increased forage for Roosevelt Elk herd, and maintenance of native grassland plant species. A lack of VMP funding has postponed the project, but the Department of Parks & Recreation is seeking funding to perform it in the Spring of 2006.

The Cahto Tribe has obtained grant funding to conduct a tree-thinning project immediately surrounding the tribal residences. The primary objective is to make a more productive forest through thinning, and a secondary benefit is the reduction of forest fire fuels, providing additional defensible space. More funding is needed to complete this project.

## **FUTURE PROJECTS: EDUCATION AND ROADSIDE FUEL BREAKS**

During the Fire Safe Council community meetings, as was noted above, stakeholders identified the need to increase public fire prevention education, addressing and road signage awareness, defensible space awareness, and water source development throughout the Battalion. Currently each local fire department and CDF station's personnel conduct separate and joint fire prevention education programs at local schools, road association meetings, and community events. During these education programs, strong emphasis will now be placed on the identified target areas. Funding is needed for local and state fire departments to provide up-to-date educational materials to the public; and all fire personnel in the Laytonville Battalion need additional fire prevention training.

Fire Safe Council meetings also identified the need for fire road access clearance and fuel reduction/shaded fuel breaks in several WUI areas. In each of these locations, overgrown brush and young saplings cause a safety hazard for both fire crews trying to enter the area and residents trying to leave in a wildfire emergency. For each evacuation route listed here, projects need to be instituted to create shaded fuel breaks extending 50 feet on both sides of the roads, by removing understory brush and trimming up trees to remove ladder fuels.

- Spy Rock Road (including Registered Guest Road, Iron Peak Road, and Blue Rock Road) is inhabited by approximately 2,000 people living in various types of homes.
- Ten Mile Creek has approximately 200 residents.
- Bear Pen subdivision contains 18 homes.
- Ebert Lane is a narrow road accessing 11 homes; its vegetation includes not only brush and saplings but also timber.
- Pepperwood Springs subdivision has approximately 20 homes.
- Cherry Creek subdivision, which currently contains about 30 homes, is becoming a very popular area for new construction.
- Mulligan Lane contains areas of brush that need to be removed.
- Bell Springs Road, a major artery, has many heavily overgrown areas.

The lack of home addresses and road signage is a huge problem throughout Battalion 4. This is due in part to the vast amount of marijuana cultivation by persons who wish their addresses



to be unknown. During public education programs, the benefits of proper addressing and road signage for both fire and medical emergencies will be strongly emphasized.

Two sets of fire prevention signs remind the general public of their fire prevention obligation and burning regulations. Each time a burn permit is issued, a fire prevention message is presented. Battalion personnel will continue Public Resources Code section 4291 and 4492 inspections of structures and power lines in each community.

## **FIRE SAFE COUNCIL COMMUNITY MEETINGS IN BATTALION 4**

### **Laytonville**

Twenty-five persons crowded into the Laytonville Fire Department's hall on May 2, thanks to Battalion Chief Larry Grafft, who arranged and advertised the meeting on short notice. Many of the attendees identified their homes as being on ranches: Cherry Creek, Twin Pines, Twin Rocks, Black Oak, and Starlight/Hunt. Others listed roads, road associations, or subdivisions, many of them identified above: Branscomb, Registered Guest, Woodman Canyon, Fox Rock, Road 307, and Cahto Meadows. Spyrock and Bell Springs roads, though unpaved, are major arteries to the northeast of Laytonville. Branscomb Road runs west from Laytonville to the town of Branscomb, which is centered around the family-owned Harwood Products lumber mill.

Residents identified their assets at risk as homes, barns, the Eel River and its fish spawning grounds, wildlife, scenic views, orchards, forests, and rangeland. They listed these ideas and concerns:

- Clear brush (11 responses) from homes, PG&E transformers, road edges, and overcrowded forests. A chipper is needed to help this work. One attendee summed up the entire county's need: "Remove fuel and plan for the worst."
- Expand water supply: Build more ponds and tanks.
- Prepare to evacuate: Develop emergency exit roads and second ways out. Plan how to notify persons who are off the "grid" and have no telephones.
- Create maps showing structures, power lines, and water supplies: Put such maps in lockboxes at entrances to populated areas; install road signs stating number of homes/persons out each road in fire-prone areas.
- Educate both full-time and weekend/part-time residents
- Perform controlled burns
- Be self sufficient; create a community pool of emergency fire tools; allow Cal Trans road work only with a fire observer present; repair equipment that presents a fire hazard; and prepare for evacuation of animals.

## **Leggett and Piercy**

Located in the far northwestern portion of the County, these small communities are heroic in their efforts to provide emergency services under difficult circumstances and with extremely limited funds. Located as they are on Highway 101 – and Leggett is at the intersection of Highways 101 and 1 -- their fire departments respond to many grisly auto accidents whose patients are passers-through and from whom costs are not recovered. Due especially to the struggles of these departments, as explained in Chapter 2, the Fire Safe Council wished to pay special attention to their residents' needs.

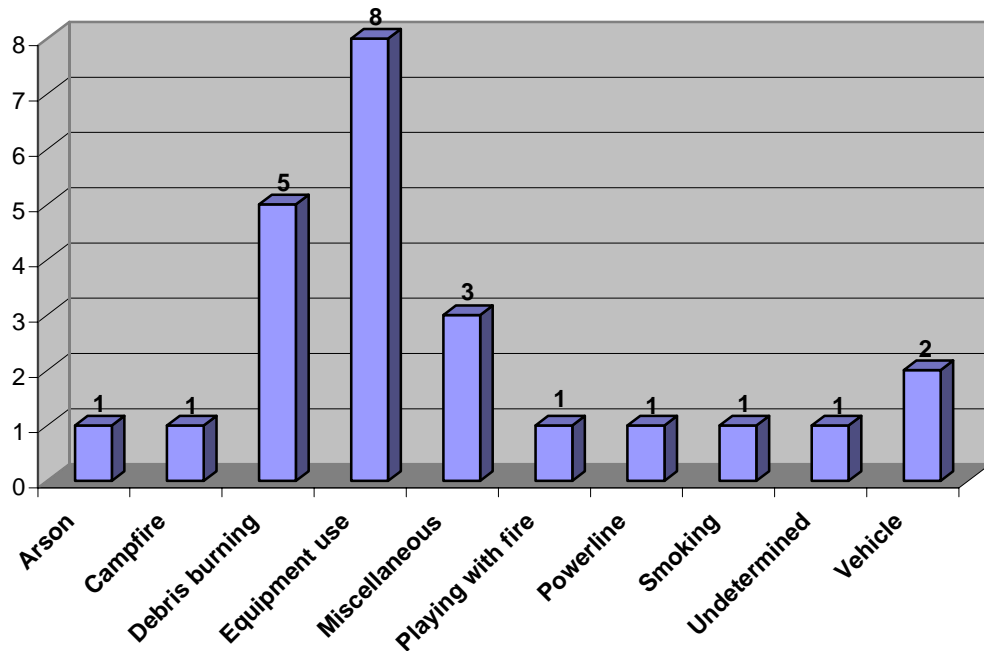
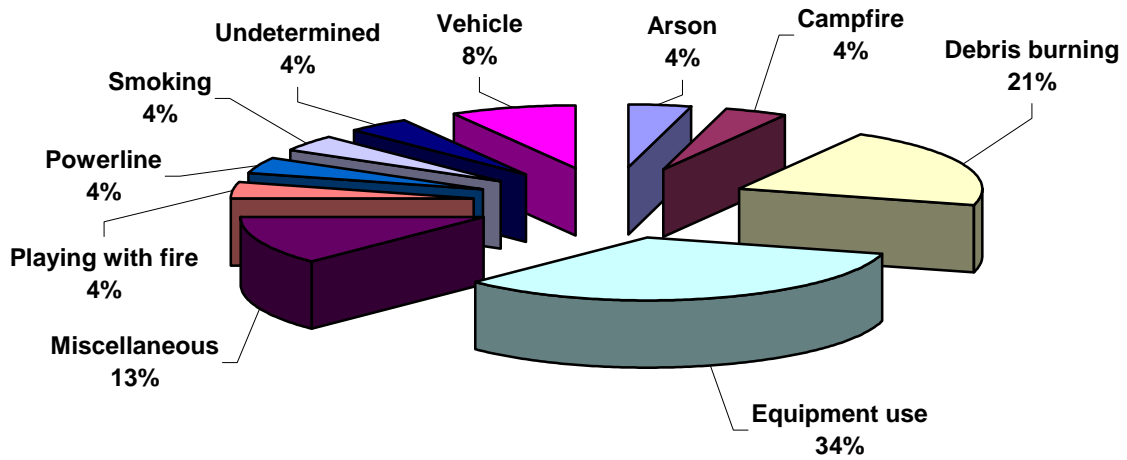
Two community meetings were held at the Leggett School cafeteria, hosted by local firefighter/EMT Cliff Skaggs. (The second meeting was held to draw more people.) Attendees were predominantly fire personnel, including Piercy Chief Bob Kirk, Leggett Chief Ely Reighter, and CDF Battalion Chief Larry Grafft. Chiefs Kirk and Reighter, intimately familiar with their areas, provided precise and thorough details on the locations of homes and Intermix communities.

All attendees agreed that local assets at risk include the historic Peg House, tourist attractions including the huge redwood Drive-Thru Tree, the Usal area and Sinkyone Wilderness State Park, Standish-Hickey State Recreation Area, and events such as the Redwood Run motorcycle tour and Reggae on the River, a concert which attracts thousands to the Eel River each summer. The CalTrans yard in Leggett was named as a hazardous materials site. Firefighter Christina Bell of Leggett requested Fire Safe materials for her grade school students and inspired MCFSC staff to pursue a county-wide educational effort to reach parents through their children. Further ideas:

- Educate residents, including children; enforce fire codes; contact the people at highest risk and ask for their cooperation.
- Reduce vegetation, especially around homes and along roads, where people throw out cigarettes; make tailgate party areas safe for large events.
- Prepare water for fire suppression; identify water locations on address posts.
- Establish communication links between residents and fire agencies; make pre-plans for at-risk communities.
- Improve roads and road signs; evacuation routes are very limited.
- Obtain better funding from the county for emergency services.
- Recruit volunteer firefighters.
- Equip pickup trucks with slip-on water tanks, radios, and first aid supplies.
- Provide incentives for residents to comply with wildfire-related regulations.

# Battalion 4 Fire Cause 2004

Total Fires: 24



## **CDF BATTALION 5 / PLANNING ZONE 3: BOONVILLE**

Battalion 5 encompasses 674 square miles or 431,393 acres and 230 miles of state and county roads, and is the 10<sup>th</sup> largest Battalion statewide, according to 1964 Fire Plan data. Two major highways within the Battalion bring tourist traffic from the Bay Area to the north coast: State Highway 128 forms the northern boundary of the Battalion, and State Highway 1 defines the western boundary. Vegetation within the Battalion varies from dense redwood/Douglas-fir forests to grassy oak woodlands.

The Battalion includes one city, Point Arena, and nine communities of various sizes: Gualala, Anchor Bay, Irish Beach, Manchester, Elk, Yorkville, Boonville, Philo, and Navarro, with two high schools and four grade schools.

CDF fire protection for the Battalion is provided by two Stations: Boonville (two engines, one dozer) and Point Arena (one engine). Additionally, four local government departments -- South Coast Fire Protection District, Redwood Coast Fire Department, Anderson Valley Fire Department, and Elk Volunteer Fire Department -- provide structure protection for their communities, as well as mutual aid to CDF for wildland fire protection. Redwood Coast Fire Department provides protection for the City of Point Arena. The community of Irish Beach, which formerly provided its own fire protection, is now covered by Redwood Coast while the possibility of permanent annexation is explored. Greenwood Ridge Fire Company, a private brigade within the Elk Volunteer Fire Department's sphere of influence, provides an additional protection resource and is available for mutual aid.

The Battalion has one lookout, Cold Springs, which was closed in 1994 but has been intermittently reopened during periods of high fire danger and lightning storms. Cold Springs Lookout is listed in the National Historic Lookout Registry and has been identified in CDF's Management Plan for Historic Preservation.

The outlook is for increased tourist traffic and rural housing in single increments and small subdivisions. As the minor subdivisions expand, an increasing fire problem will exist in both the prevention and suppression of fires. Logging, which formerly provided the area's major economic resource, is decreasing due to environmental concerns, economic factors, and regulatory changes. However, future fire control problems remain a concern, as areas that are logged have an increase in logging slash and possibly a lack of access due to road closures. Areas where logging is not occurring may have a higher density of live and/or dead vegetation as well as an increase in poor or limited access. The Battalion's overall fire hazard potential will likely increase due to increases in tourism, traffic, off-road recreation, camping, and rural subdivision development in the Wildland-Urban Interface.



Vineyard conversions are still occurring, primarily within the oak woodlands. These conversions create greenbelts (fire fuelbreaks) on the valley floor, along the lower slopes surrounding the valley, and now reaching the upper ridges.

Forty-eight fires were reported within the Battalion in 2004. Five of these consumed 9 acres and the remaining fires burned less than ¼ acre each. Debris burning (17) was the leading cause of fires; the five-year average for debris burning is 15 fires. Campfires (6) were the second leading cause. In 2004, for the eleventh year, a countywide burning ban was in effect from June until November.

Fire Prevention signs -- two sets in the Battalion -- remind local residents of their fire prevention obligation and inform summer residents, tourists, and locals of the need for fire permits. A fire prevention message is presented to the public directly through the in-person issuance of burning permits.

## **FIRE PREVENTION ACTIVITIES**

- Display and information booth at the Mendocino County Fair and Apple Show
- Participate in the Mendocino County Fair parade
- Participate in school programs with Smokey Bear emphasizing fire and home safety
- Fire Prevention and Safety at the Boy Scouts of America camp in Navarro
- LE-38 inspections of residences and inspections of power lines
- Roadside Fire Prevention signs
- Burn permits issued in person with awareness and safety training given to permittees
- Joint educational outreach efforts with Fire Safe Council

## **LITTLE MILL CREEK SHELTERED FUEL BREAK**

Battalion 5's primary vegetation management effort at this time is the Little Mill Creek Sheltered Fuel Break, a project for which the Mendocino County Fire Safe Council obtained \$35,000 of BLM funding. Work began in Spring of 2005 and should be finished by Spring of 2006. A description of the problem and solution follows.

The ridgeline of the Little Mill Creek drainage is the high divide between two forks of the Navarro River. It also forms a portion of the northerly ridge that defines the western end of Anderson Valley. The ridge is, practically speaking, the dividing line between thousands of acres of timberland to the north and the populated valley lands to the south. In 1931, the Comptche fire, which originated in the Big River drainage to the east and was pushed by strong northeasterly winds, entered the valley near this area. That fire burned more than 31,000 acres and destroyed twelve residences at a time when the area was sparsely populated.

Several fires have occurred in the same area within the last two decades, ignited by logging

activities, lightning strikes, or campers along the North Fork of the Navarro River. The northerly timberland has been logged several times, resulting in a dense canopy of young Douglas-fir and redwood. Tanoak has also overgrown the area due to the past practice of taking the softwood and leaving the hardwood. Currently, the ridge is densely covered with brush, young saplings, and third growth Douglas-fir and redwood. The vegetative cover has nearly overgrown the old logging truck road that runs along the ridge. In even moderate fire conditions, it is questionable whether fire crews could attempt a direct attack on a fire approaching the ridge. The old logging landings have also become so overgrown that they would not provide adequate safety zones.

This project is creating a sheltered (or “shaded”) fuel break along the 2.5 miles of ridge road from the Nash Mill Road to the Holmes Ranch Road by doing traditional understory removal and trimming up ladder fuels on the overstory trees for an average distance of 50 feet on either side of the ridge. The goal is to reduce the fuel load along the ridge to the extent that fire apparatus could either attempt a direct attack or initiate a defensive firing operation. Additionally, existing landings are having old cull log decks removed by burning and the perimeters treated in a similar manner as the ridge top, to create viable safety zones. Upon completion, this project will significantly increase firefighters’ ability to keep a fire in the timberland from entering the populated valley lands.

This project was scheduled to begin in the fall of 2004, but, due to a delay in funding, began in March 2005. CDF hand crews cleared and burned all vegetation 4” and smaller and cut larger stems for firewood during Spring of 2005. During fire season, crews utilized a chipper. In winter of 2005-06, an arm-mounted mechanical masticator which works from the existing road will be utilized. The project was designed and is being managed by Colin Wilson, Anderson Valley Fire Chief. Adjacent property owners are extremely cooperative and appreciative of this work.

## **FIRE SAFE COUNCIL COMMUNITY MEETINGS IN BATTALION 5**

The Mendocino County Fire Safe Council held two community meetings in Battalion 5 early in 2005, at Boonville and Point Arena. The meetings were well attended and several priorities for future fire prevention work were identified. At Boonville, Anderson Valley residents were interested in improved access and signage along major secondary roads. At Point Arena, South Coast respondents were interested in additional fire prevention education and fuel reduction projects, both around structures and throughout the wildland.

### **Boonville / Anderson Valley Community Meeting**

Invited and hosted by Chief Colin Wilson, 22 persons gathered in the Boonville fire station on March 22 for the first community outreach meeting to gain data for this Plan. Attendees hailed from the Nash, Holmes, Perry Gulch, and Sky Ranches, as well as Manchester, Clow

Ridge, and Peachland Roads, all of which are Wildland Interface and Intermix areas. Residents stated these concerns and suggestions:

- Provide improved access and signage along secondary roads, prepare for evacuation, protect wooden bridges, and resolve address inconsistencies
- Develop, increase, and identify water sources for fire suppression, including ponds, tanks, and hydrants fitted for fire engine refills. The fire department is very proactive in encouraging these projects among vineyard owners, ranchers, and homeowners.
- Remove vegetation around homes and organize volunteer cleanup for elderly persons
- Remove vegetation along roads, including the eucalyptus trees along Highway 128 near Peachland Road
- Install additional fire prevention signs along roads, especially to address the issue of lit cigarette butts thrown from cars
- Assure continued funding for firefighting air tankers and helicopters
- Provide wood stove maintenance and inspections

### **Point Arena / South Coast Community Meeting**

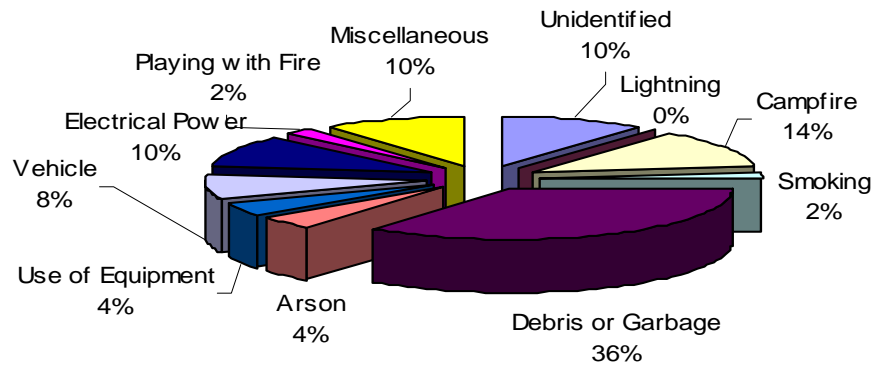
Volunteers from the South Coast Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), formerly the South Coast Neighborhood Emergency Services Team (NEST), were in abundance at the meeting held April 25 in the Point Arena Veterans' Hall. Led and trained by volunteers Michelle Staples and Ken Reynoldson, these people are well aware of the full spectrum of emergency situations. Ms. Staples is especially proactive in community disaster planning and preparedness, including evacuation of large animals. Other eminent attendees included Mayor Leslie Dahlhoff and OES Coordinator Annie LeRoy of Point Arena, South Coast Fire Chief Leighton Nelsen, Redwood Coast Fire Chief Mike Suddith, Julie Verran of the Independent Coast Observer newspaper, and others from both Point Arena and Gualala. Special thanks to Ms. Staples and Ms. LeRoy for advertising and hosting the meeting.

Although the ocean moderates the weather immediately on the Coast, wildfire is still a distinct possibility. Mayor Dahlhoff reports that the coastal City of "Point Arena was destroyed by a fast-moving forest fire in the 1940's." And, of course, areas just a few miles inland are nearly as hot and dry as the inland valleys. Concerns include the following:

- Protection of water and electrical power supply
- Preservation of rare plants, parks, and historic districts
- Preparation for evacuation of large animals
- Protection against hazardous materials located at the Hay Industrial Park
- Possibility of landslides blocking limited escape routes
- Desire for more fire prevention education and firefighter training
- Need for pre-identified evacuation routes

## Battalion 5 Fire Cause 2004

Total Fires: 48



## **CDF BATTALION 6 / PLANNING ZONE 4: FORT BRAGG**

Battalion 6 encompasses approximately 532 square miles, or about 341,000 acres, with 240 miles of State and County roads, plus an estimated 1,305 miles of private dirt roads and 159 miles of railroad. The battalion has two major highways which bring tourist traffic to the north coast. State Highway 1 spans the entire west section of the battalion along the coast and intersects with State Highway 20, then continues north and intersects with US Highway 101 at Leggett. Highway 20 connects Highway 1 to Highway 101 and links the cities of Fort Bragg and Willits.

Geographically, the battalion boundaries are as follows: starting at the northwest corner from the Pacific Ocean near the town of Rockport, it runs south along the coast to the Navarro River at Highway 1 and Highway 128. It then runs east along the river and Highway 128 about 10 miles to Flynn Creek Road, then northeast to State Highway 20, then north to Sherwood Peak. It follows Sherwood Ridge about six miles continuing northwest, following mostly along ridge lines to the Pacific Ocean. It finally intersects at a point just south of the town of Rockport, a distance of about 25 miles, forming the northeastern boundary.

Battalion 6 includes two CDF Fire Stations: the Fort Bragg Station (Battalion Headquarters) with one fire engine, and the Woodlands Station east of Mendocino, also with one engine. The fire protection community includes five local government departments including Fort Bragg Fire (paid and volunteer), which is the only LRA jurisdiction within the Battalion. The balance of the fire districts are all volunteer including Mendocino, Albion/Little River, Comptche, and the non-tax-supported volunteer department at Westport. These entities provide structure protection, emergency medical services, and rescue response for their communities as well as mutual aid on wildland fires. Mendocino Coast Hospital provides ground ambulance service, and CALSTAR (Ukiah) and REACH (Lakeport and Santa Rosa) provide helicopter emergency medical services (EMS). The U.S. Coast Guard provides EMS and water rescue from Noyo Harbor in Fort Bragg and can provide additional helicopter support from Eureka.

Seven communities of various sizes include Albion, Caspar, Comptche, Fort Bragg, Little River, Mendocino and Westport, with one community college, three high schools, two junior high schools, numerous private and public grade schools, one hospital, five radio stations, and one television station. There is a combined census survey of 19,529 in total population. Although there are major commercial timber holdings including Mendocino Redwood Company, Hawthorne/Campbell, and Pioneer Resources LLC, the battalion has evolved from what was formerly a lumber-orientated community towards a present-day seasonal vacation and recreational community. Services range from full-time to seasonal or part-time employment, for limited logging, construction, restaurants, motels, fuel services, grocery stores, and tourist attractions.

Included in the battalion is Jackson Demonstration State Forest (JDSF), purchased in 1947 from the Caspar Lumber Company and the largest State Forest at 50,200 acres. JDSF is a public use area excluding motorized vehicles and includes campsites and day use areas. The forest is a popular area for hiking, biking, hunting, horseback riding, swimming, and picnicking, and is visited by over 40,000 people annually.

The California State Parks and Recreation Department's Mendocino District is headquartered within the battalion at Russian Gulch State Park. Seven campground facilities and numerous state beaches and recreation areas are in the battalion. This includes the Mendocino Woodlands Campground which is contracted to private management with occupancies of up to 500 per day. The State Parks system has increased in size through recent acquisitions which include 7,300 acres along Big River to the coast in 2003. The coastal area at the north end of Fort Bragg known as Glass Beach, and the Point Cabrillo Lighthouse and surrounding area have also been transferred to the State Parks system.

## **BATTALION 6 FORECAST**

The outlook is for increased tourist traffic and more residents in additional rural homes and subdivisions. The Georgia Pacific Lumber Mill, previously the largest business and employer in Fort Bragg, has closed and the site is for sale. The City of Fort Bragg is now in community development planning for the site, which includes 400+ acres of prime coastal real estate. Logging continues to decline with more timber harvest plans on smaller acres. Projected fire hazards and at-risk assets will continue to grow due to the changing demographics of the area. As rural development continues and subdivisions expand, an increasing fire problem will exist in both preventing and suppressing fires. The points below identify some issues that will increase the complexity of the future fire environment.

- The Mendocino County Planning Department has received record numbers of building permit applications for three successive years – currently approximately 1,200 per year.
- Response times outside developed communities can be quite extended, and resources are limited. The topography of the battalion, in conjunction with the winding, slow, and limited road system, are contributing factors to response times.
- Developed water resources are sparse with limited availability and accessibility in outlying areas.
- The increased population in rural areas will have an impact on, and strain the already limited resources in, the area. This will potentially result in increased fire starts as well as medical aid and rescue response requests.
- Increased public land use including off-road recreation and camping will result in additional potential for fire as well as medical aids.
- Property addressing and access continue to be marginal and inconsistent throughout Mendocino County, resulting in increased dispatch and response times.



- The buildup of logging slash and overgrowth have increased due to road closures and declining access as timber plans have closed.
- Population growth will also increase equipment use and debris burns, increasing the potential for fire starts and control burn escapes.
- Lack of awareness and education regarding fire safe planning by persons moving from city to rural environments regarding fire safe planning manifests itself through poor preparation and ultimately increased risks.

## **FIRE HISTORY 2004**

Battalion 6 fire history for 2004 includes a total of 38 fires and 64 acres burned. Children playing with fire was the leading cause, resulting in 17% of the starts. The balance of causes and frequencies are depicted in the chart at the end of this section.

## **FIRE PREVENTION EDUCATION ACTIVITIES**

- Continuing participation and interaction with the local schools will be a major component of the Battalion 6 prevention and education program. This focuses on youth education and prevention as well as providing a conduit to parents for prevention information and fire safe planning. The program has been successful to date and has been well received by the community.
- Battalion personnel regularly participate in community events including parades, fairs, and barbeques utilizing Smokey Bear, fire apparatus, and booths to distribute prevention and education materials including fire safe pamphlets. The events also provide opportunities for personal public “one on one” contact for adults and youth alike relating to prevention, education, career, and general CDF-Fire information.
- The battalion maintains and annually updates roadside fire prevention signs. Mendocino County Fire Safe Council contact information will be included on new signs.
- Fire Safe inspections continue in the community with LE-38 inspections of residences and power lines. The battalion will interface with local government fire departments and the Fire Safe Council to identify communities at risk to be targeted for focused inspection programs.
- The annual issuance of Burn Permits including LE-63 (campfire), LE-5 (dooryard), and LE-7 (project burn) are used as opportunities to increase public awareness and conduct training in the proper and safe use of fire.

- The battalion will continue to participate in public outreach meetings sponsored by the Fire Safe Council, to assist in education, and to identify public concerns regarding prevention or future community projects.
- The battalion will continue to co-sponsor, with timber stakeholders, the annual timber “industry meeting” to update and exchange contact information, identify available resources, and identify logging operations or major projects occurring within timber holdings.

## **FIRE PREVENTION PROJECTS**

Battalion 6 is currently participating in a 96-acre fuels reduction and obstruction clearance project at the Little River Airport, funded through the Bureau of Land Management. CDF-Fire is providing fire crews and fire engine support when needed, for the removal of invasive vegetation and trees.

The battalion has a priority project to update interagency fire plans with the Department of Parks and Recreation. The goal is to identify and update personnel, resources, assets at risk, modified suppression areas, and training needs between the agencies for fire suppression and prevention. With the significant expansion of the Department of Parks and Recreation’s State Park System -- and given the fact that CDF Fire has Direct Protection Authority for the State Parks -- the battalion needs to identify and ensure maintenance access into all areas of the State Park and Campground facilities. A focus will be assessing the condition and maintaining access and clearance of the Big River Haul Road, which borders Big River from the coast within the Russian River State Park and continues inland into Jackson Demonstration State Forest.

A future project may be revisiting the removal or reduction of the Gorse (*ulex europaeus*) overgrowth in the Caspar area along Highway 1. This was a previously identified 3-year project for the eradication of this extremely invasive shrub that poses a significant access hazard and a serious fire danger due to its density and fuel loading. It is also a threat to the biodiversity of wildland areas. Removal is a difficult challenge due to Gorse’s sharp thorns which can easily pierce a firefighter’s gloves.

## **FIRE SAFE COUNCIL COMMUNITY MEETINGS IN BATTALION 6**

Fire Safe Council outreach meetings in the communities of Mendocino and Westport identified public concerns relating to hazards and assets at risk within coastal communities and established priorities for addressing community needs. Listed here are the communities’ top priorities; further details are included later in this report. Additional meetings and planning, which may include preparing applications for grant funding, will be necessary to implement action plans addressing these needs.

## **Ideas and Needs Identified at Westport Meeting**

- Establish a tax-supported Fire District to ensure adequate funding and support for equipment and operations.
- Increase firefighter training and education.
- Improve community coordination and cooperation for local response and reducing fire risks; improve education in fire prevention.
- Gain cooperative compliance with Public Resources Code section 4291 fire safe standards.
- Determine how to eliminate logging slash accumulations.
- Reduce and maintain reduction of large tracts of grass and other vegetative fuels bordering structures and roads.
- Ensure adequate supplies and access to private and community water storage reserves.
- Provide for upgrades to the community water plant and Wages Creek, the community water supply.

These issues are the community's top priorities and do not include all the points discussed at the meeting.

## **Needs Identified at Mendocino/Fort Bragg Area Meeting**

These communities perceive a lack of responsiveness from state government agencies, especially CalTrans and State Parks, regarding dead trees and excessive fuel buildup along roadways and the borders between residential properties and state lands. Other needs and ideas are these:

- Improved information and communication between the communities and federal, state, and local governmental agencies
- Better fire/rescue access to State Parks property
- Fuel breaks and reduction of dead trees and brush on JDSF residential boundaries and public access roadways.
- Better access to service forestry
- Compliance with the requirements of Public Resources Code 4291, plus proper road and driveway clearance
- Uniform and consistent application of road and residential addressing
- Water resources for fire protection need to be identified, accessible, and compatible with fire department apparatus.

CDF-Fire's Battalion 6 is committed to working cooperatively with the Mendocino County Fire Safe Council, communities, and local government fire jurisdictions to assist in addressing these concerns, by technical assistance or facilitation through administrative

services. Battalion personnel will endeavor to make positive contributions to mitigate the identified issues.

## **Further Details about Battalion 6 Meeting Locations and Attendees**

### **Westport**

This tiny, beautiful coastal community north of Fort Bragg was purposely selected by the MCFSC as a location for a Fire Plan meeting due to its residents' efforts during the past year to re-establish a trained emergency response presence on the north coast. Coached and encouraged by CDF Battalion Chief Jim Davis, the Westport Volunteer Fire Department has been reorganized and revitalized by 18 firefighters who have devoted a huge amount of time to fire and medical training, as well as refurbishing and enlarging the fire station facilities. In June 2005 Chief Davis handed the baton to Beck Regalia, Chief, and David Doriot, Assistant Chief, following a Fire Department election.

The ten persons who attended the community meeting were mostly fire personnel, plus County Supervisor Kendall Smith, whose presence was greatly appreciated. As was noted above, creation of a Fire District with taxing authority was attendees' strongest desire. The Westport Fire Department has long existed under the jurisdiction of the Westport Water District, the only governing entity in the area, the boundaries of which include only the homes in Westport village proper. Firefighters at the meeting reported that fire suppression response extends far beyond this, yet the fire department has no authority to tax residents for providing such coverage. A few weeks after the community meeting, the Fire Department held a community barbeque featuring Chief Davis' delicious chicken. A significant sum was raised but the needs are still great.

In addition to those noted above, concerns were also raised about the village's dozens of abandoned houses surrounded by overgrown vegetation, and the Westport Beach "RV and Campground," on the beach north of town. Campers in this area number in the hundreds but have no education about wildfire hazard or where to go if a wildfire should threaten the area.

### **Mendocino**

Realtors, foresters, insurance agents, fire chiefs, and several female firefighters were among the 20 persons who gathered on April 28 at the Mendocino Fire Department, hosted by Fire Marshal Jeff Wall. Attendees represented Comptche, Mendocino, Fort Bragg, Little River, and surrounding WUI neighborhoods.

Another primary concern is protection of electric power supply to coastal communities. Based on experiences of extended power outages due to winter storms, several residents stressed the need to protect PG&E lines from wildfires as well. One main trunk line extends from inland to Fort Bragg, and one trunk line extends down the coast from Fort Bragg to Elk.

Due to line capacity limitations, no backup is currently available. Wildfire damage to a major transmission line could leave thousands of coastal residents -- and emergency response personnel -- without power for days or even weeks.

Ron Ensign of Surfwood Estates, near Mendocino, long a proponent of fire safe vegetation management, expressed strong concern about dead and dying trees and other fuels on State Parks and CalTrans lands adjacent to homes. In July 2005, MCFSC staff was able to relay his concerns directly to leaders of the California Fire Alliance at its first-ever public meeting, held precisely for the purpose of hearing the concerns of local Fire Safe groups. At that meeting, MCFSC suggested that State Parks and CalTrans officials, as key land managers in the State, be included in the Fire Alliance, in addition to the federal agencies which currently comprise its majority. CDF Director Dale Geldert, who chaired the meeting, responded by saying he would like the Fire Alliance to establish a task force of federal and state land managers who would respond to local residents' concerns about government-owned lands.

## Battalion 6 Fire Cause 2004

Total Fires: 38

